

Message Text

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ACTION ARA-20

INFO OCT-01 EUR-25 ADP-00 CIAE-00 DODE-00 PM-07 H-03

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FM AMEMBASSY GEORGETOWN

TO SECSTATE WASHDC PRIORITY 8617

INFO AMEMBASSY BRIDGETOWN

AMEMBASSY KINGSTON

AMEMBASSY LONDON

AMEMBASSYN PORT OF SPAIN

AMCONSUL MARTINIQUE

USCINCSO FOR POLAD

C O N F I D E N T I A L SECTION 1 OF 2 GEORGETOWN 1032

E.O. 11652: GDS

TAGS: PINT, GY

SUBJECT: GUYANA ELECTION--FORECAST

1. SUMMARY: IN JULY 16 ELECTION, GUYANA'S RULING PEOPLE'S NATIONAL CONGRESS(PNC) SHOULD INCREASE ITS SHARE IN 53 SEAT PARLIAMENT FROM 30 SEATS WON IN 1968 TO BETWEEN 31 AND 34 AND WILL PROBABLY FAIL TO OBTAIN STATED GOAL OF TWO-THIRDS MAJORITY. PNC VOTES WILL COME LARGELY FROM AFRO-GUYANESE PART OF ELECTORATE, BUT PARTY WILL BE HELPED BY WIDE-SCALE RIGGING, OVERSEAS VOTE, AND SOME LIMITED CORSSING OF RACIAL LINES. OPPOSITION PEOPLE'S PROGRESSIVE PARTY WILL PROBABLY DROP TO BETWEEN 15 AND 18 SEATS, WHILE LIBERATOR PARTY WILL WIN 2 TO 4 SEATS AND PEOPLE'S DEMOCRATIC MOVEMENT WILL FAIL TO WIN EVEN SINGLE SEAT. IN UNLIKELY EVENT PNC DECIDED TO MAXIMIZE RIGGING AND VIRTUALLY ABANDON PRETENSE OF HONEST ELECTION, PNC VOTE TOTAL COULD SURPASS TWO-THIRDS. ONE ESTIMATE, BASED ON ASSUMPTION THAT THIS WILL BE THE CASE, GIVES PNC 38 SEATS, PPP 14 AND LP ONE, BUT THIS WOULD APPEAR EXTREME. END SUMMARY

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2. ANY FORECAST OF GUAYANESE ELECTION OUTCOME MUST BE PREFACED BY MENTION OF TWO SPECIAL DIFFICULTIES. FIRST, THERE IS LACK OF RELIABLE AND UP-TO-DATE STATISTICAL INFORMATION ON ELECTORATE. SECOND, AND MORE IMPORTANT, THERE IS PROBLEM OF RIGGING. IT

ISTAKEN FORGRANTED THAT RULING PEOPLE'S NATIONAL CONGRESS (PNC) WILL ENGAGE IN VARIOUS IRREGULAR PRACTICES SUCH AS BALLOT BOX SWITCHING AND MANIPULATION OF POSTAL AND OVERSEAS VOTING. TO FORECAST ELECTION, ONE MUST GAUGE INTENTIONS OF FIXERS AND EVALUATE THEIR CHANCES OF SUCCESS.

3. PEOPLE'S NATIONAL CONGRESS(PNC). VOTES FOR RULING PNC WILL COME FROM FOUR SOURCES, I.E., ETHNIC VOTE OF AFRO-GUYANESE, VOTES ACROSS RACIAL LINES, RIGGING, AND OVERSEAS VOTE.

(A) PNC CAN BE EXPECTED TO GAIN NEARLY ALL OF VOTES FROM AFRO-GUYANESE PORTION OF ELECTORATE. BASED ON 1960 CENSUS, AFRO-GUYANESE COMPRISE APPROXIMATELY THIRTY-THREE PERCENT OF VOTING AGE POPULATION. (THIS PROPORTION IS LARGER THAN THEIR SHARE OF TOTAL POPULATION DUE TO GREATER NUMBERS OF EAST INDIANS AMONG THOSE LESS THAN TWENTY-ONE YEARS OLD.) HIGH UNEMPLOYMENT AND SOME OPPOSITION TO BURNHAM COULD ERODE PNC RACIAL BASE TO ABOUT THIRTY PERCENT OF VOTE. THIS WOULD GIVE PNC SIXTEEN OF FIFTY-THREE SEATS INPARLIAMENT. AFRO-GUYANESE WHO DO NOT VOTE FOR PNC ARE MORE LIKELY TO ABSTAIN THAN CROSS RACIAL LINES TO VOTE FOR OPPOSITION PEOPLE'S PROGRESSIVE PARTY(PPP) OR LIBERUN PARTY, WHICH MOST VIEW AS ANOTHER EAST INDIAN PARTY, ALTHOUGH SMALL NUMBER MAY BE ATTRACTED BY LLEWELYN JOHN'S PDM.

(B) PNC CAN BE EXPECTED TO BUILD UPON RACIAL BASE BY ATTRACTING FON SUPPORT FROM GUYANA'S OTHER RACIAL GROUPS, EAST INDIANS, AMERINDIANS, CHINESE, EUROPEANS, AND RACIAL MIXTURES AND FROM EFFECTS OF DEVELOPING "BANDWAGON PSYCHOLOGY". WHEN ELECTION CAMPAIGN BEGAN, BURNHAM WAS CONFIDENT HIS PERSONAL POPULARITY AND RECORD FOR KEEPING RACIAL CALM WOULD BREAK GUYANA'S HISTORY OF VOTING ALONG RACIAL LINES. PNC CONFIDENTLY STATED TWO-THIRDS MAJORITY WAS ITS ELECTORAL GOAL. HOWEVER, RACIAL VIOLENCE BETWEEN EAST INDIANS AND AFRO-GUYANESE SUCH AS OCCURED JUNE 24 ALONG EAST COAST ROAD AND DISRUPTION OF CAMPAIGN RALLIES OF BOTH PARTIES IN RECENT WEEKS HAVE AGAIN POLARIZED RACIAL FEELING. GUYANESE HAVE NOT FORGOTTEN RACIAL CONFLICTS OF EARLY 1960'S. FURTHER, THERE IS SOME EVIDENCE OF FAMILIAR INTEMIDATION
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TACTICS AGAIN BEING USED IN RURAL AREAS BY PPP TO HOLD EAST INDIANS IN LINE AS IN PAST. FINALLY, PNC PUBLICITY ABOUT GOAL OF TWO-THIRDS MAJORITY HAS STIRRED UP FEARS THAT PNC MIGHT USE MAJORITY TO AMEND CONSTITUTION TO ESTABLISH AFRICAN STYLE ONE-PARTY STATE IN GUYANA DESPITE PUBLIC DISCLAIMERS OF SUCH AN OBJECTIVE BY PRIME MINISTER AND FOREIGN MINISTER. FOR THESE REASONS, PNC CAN BE EXPECTED TO ATTRACT LESS SUPPORT FROM OTHER GROUPS THAN IT HAD HOPED AND THAN SEEMED POSSIBLE AT OUTSET OF CAMPAIGN. BURNHAM'S OWN DRAWING POWERN, FEAR OF VIOLENCE IF OPPOSITION PPP RETURNS TO POWER, AND RELATIVE PROSPERITY OF RICE FARMERS WILL DRAW LIMITED RACIAL CROSSOVER AND ON BALANCE MAY ADD SEVEN TO TEN PERCENT OF VOTE TO PNC RACIAL BASE OF THIRTY PERCENT.

(C) RIGGING WILL BE MOST IMPORTANT ADDITIONAL SOURCE OF PNC VOTES. IN GUYANA ITSELF, RIGGING IS LIKELY TO OCCUR IN POSTAL VOTING, IN PROXY VOTING AND BY BALLOT BOX SWITCHING AND STUFFING. GOVERNMENT INTENDS TO COUNT ALL BALLOTS IN THREE LOCATIONS. FREQUENT OPPORTUNITIES FOR TAMPERING WILL OCCUR WHILE BALLOTS ARE IN TRANSIT FROM POLLING PLACES. HOW MUCH RIGGING ADDS TO PNC VOTE TOTAL IS LIKELY TO BE FUNCTION OF THREE FACTORS: (1) EFFICIENCY OF FIXERS, (2) WILLINGNESS OF PNC TO MAKE ELECTION OBVIOUS MOCKERY, AND (3) WATCHFULNESS OF OPPOSITION. THERE ARE DOUBTS EVEN AMONG SOME OF THOSE INVOLVED IN THE RIGGING AS TO HOW MANY VOTES CAN BE FIXED AS A PRACTICAL MATTER WITHOUT ELECTION BECOMING COMPLETE FARCE. IF LATTER WERE TO OCCUR, BURNHAM WOULD LOSE MUCH OF HIS STANDING AS DEMOCRATIC PARLIAMENTARY LEADER AND HIS CAREFULLY CULTIVATED IMAGE IN NON-ALIGNED WORLD AND CARIBBEAN WOULD SUFFER. OPPOSITION PARTIES MAY ALSO EXERCISE SOME LIMITING INFLUENCE OVER SIZE OF ANY FRAUDULENT VOTE. OPPOSITION LEADER JAGAN HAS CALLED FOR EAST INDIANS TO USE ANY AND ALL MEANS TO ENSURE BALLOTS ARE COUNTED AT LOCAL POLLING PLACES. WHILE THIS MAY BE NO MORE THAN RHETORIC, OPPOSITION PARTIES DID LEARN LESSON IN 1968 AND WILL BE MORE WATCHFUL THIS TIME. ALSO, IMPLIED THREAT OF VIOLENCE COULD REDUCE TOTAL TURNOUT AND VOTE. UNDER THESE CIRCUMSTANCES, RIGGING IN DOMESTIC VOTE COUNT COULD BRING PNC AN ADDITIONAL FIFTEEN TO TWENTY PERCENT OF VOTE. (IT IS ESTIMATED THAT IN 1968 ELECTION RIGGING BROUGHT PNC FIFTEEN PERCENT OF VOTE.) OVERALL, THEN, IF ABOVE PROJECTION IS BORNE OUT BY RESULTS, PNC CAN EXPECT TO RECEIVE BETWEEN FIFTY-TWO AND SIXTY PERCENT OF INTERNAL VOTE.

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(D) FINAL SLICE OF PNC VOTE TOTAL WILL BE PROVIDED BY OVERSEAS VOTE. IN 1968 GUYANESE CITIZENS LIVING OVERSEAS WERE ALLOWED TO VOTE FOR FIRST TIME AND PNC CAPTURED NINETY-FOUR PERCENT OF VOTE. THERE IS NO REASON TO BELIEVE THAT PNC WILL CAPTURE ANY LESS THIS TIME, ESPECIALLY AS GOVT HAS HAD BETTER ACCESS TO OVERSEAS GUYANESE THAN HAVE OPPOSITION PARTIES, WHICH HAVE DONE VIRTUALLY NOTHING TO ENLIST VOTES FROM ABROAD. IF, AS IS EXPECTED, THERE ARE 35,000 OVERSEAS VOTERS, THIS WILL ADD FIVE PERCENT TO PNC INTERNAL VOTE FOR TOTAL OF FIFTY-SEVEN TO SIXTY-FIVE PERCENT OF VOTE OR THIRTY-ONE TO THIRTY-FOUR SEATS.

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C O N F I D E N T I A L SECTION 2 OF 2 GEORGETOWN 1032

4. PEOPLE'S PROGRESSIVE PARTY.(PPP). PPP, WHOSE SUPPORT IS ALMOST TOTALLY BASED ON RACE, IS LIKELY TO SUFFER SLIGHT LOSSES AMONG ITS TRADITIONAL EAST INDIAN SUPPORTERS. THERE WILL BE SMALL NUMBER OF EAST INDIANS WHO DO CROSS RACIAL LINES TO VOTE PNC AS WELL AS THOSE EAST INDIANS, ESPECIALLY FROM PROFESSIONAL AND BUSINESS MIDDLE CLASS GROUPS, WHO SEE NEWLY FORMED LIBERATOR PARTY(LP) AS AN INDIAN PARTY AND VOTE FOR IT AS ALTERNATIVE

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DGGIYNG. IN XRMYP PPP (#)
THIRTY-SIX
PERCENT OF VOTE AND NINETEEN SEATS. IN 1973,PPP STRENGTH SHOULD DECLINE, AS PNC'S RISES, TO BETWEEN TWENTY-SEVEN AND
THIRTY-THREE PERCENT OF VOTE AND FIFTEEN TO EIGHTEEN SEATS.

5. LIBERAZOR PARTY(LP). LIBERATOR PARTY WHICH INCLUDES OLD
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UNITED FORCE(UF) WILL DRAW ITS SUPPORT FROM OLD UF CONSTITUENCY, SCQHM VOTES ATTRACTED FROM PPP, AND VOTES FROM THOSE WHO IN PAST MAY HAVE ENTIRELY ABSTAINED FOR LACK OF ALTERNATIVE BETWEEN PPP AND PNC.LP IS HAMPERED BY ITS VULNERABILITY TO RIGGING, ITS LACK OF BROAD BASE AND INSUFFICIENT TIME TO ORGANIZE ON A NATIONAL SCALE. MANY OF THE VOTES WHICH IN 1968 WENT TO THE UF WERE FROM AMERINDIANS IN INTERIOR OF GUYANA. SINCE INTERIOR IS ISOLATED AND GOVERNMENT APPEARS TO BE MAKING SERIOUS EFFORT TO FURTHER CONTROL ACCESS DURING ELECTION, POSSIBILITY OF LARGE SCALE RIGGING HERE IS GREAT. LP IS LIKELY, THEN, TO LOSEIWOOD PART OF UF'S AMERINDIAN VOKB GIVEN THESE CONSIDERATIONS, LP MAY BE EXPECTED TO WIN NO MORE THAN FOUR TO SEVEN PERCENT OF VOTE AND AT MOST TWO TO FOUR SEATS IN PARLIAMENT.

6. PEOPLE'S DEMOCRATIC MOVEMENT(PDM).PDM IS PARTYNOF ONE
MAN, ITS LEADER AND FORMER PFN MINISTER, LLEWELYN JOHN.ALTHOUGH
PDM MAY ATTRACT VOTES OF SOME AFRO-GUYANESE WHO REJECT PNC,
PARTY WILL PROABLY RECEIVE NO MORE THAN ONE OR TWO PERCENT OF
TOTAL VOTE AND WIN NO SEAT IN PARLIAMENT. KING

NOTE BY OC/T: (#) AS RECEIVED, CORRECTION TO FOLLOW.

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